

## **Passaic River Superfund Community Advisory Group Monthly Meeting Summary Thursday, November 12, 2015**

### **DRAFT**

#### **Completion of NRD Projects Matrix**

The CAG is ready to submit its matrix to the State, members were provided a last opportunity to provide input and comments.

#### **EPA Updates**

Sophia Rini is taking on day-to-day responsibilities for community outreach on the Passaic River site. She was active in the proposed plan activities in 2014.

#### ***Status of Lower Eight Mile ROD***

The current expected date for the final ROD is February 2016, there is a high level of approval needed for such a large project and EPA is continuing to work on responses to comments. The CAG noted that this is a slip from the 2015 date that was announced last year.

#### ***Understanding future process on the Lister Ave Site***

The land remedy for the site was an interim remedy as there were not a lot of technology options for this waste at the time, and on-site incineration was not viewed favorably by the community. Every 5 years EPA needs to review the site and make sure the remedy is working as designed. At this time, the fourth five-year review is taking place. EPA had asked for comments by November 13 on any issues that people feel should be considered in the review. A re-evaluation of technologies is also underway to look at any other technologies that may be available now that were not available when the interim remedy was proposed. Tiera is conducting this study and will submit a report to EPA shortly. EPA will share this draft report with the CAG and look for feedback when that is available. Depending on what the report finds, there may be discussion about possible changes to the remedy or moving to a final remedy at the site.

CAG question: Do you know the scope of the remedies they are exploring? EPA did not screen anything out so all options are on the table.

CAG question: How do you get access to the site with the warehouse there? EPA has the code and can access the site when needed.

CAG question: Are they going to look at microbial remediation? Not sure what scope they are looking at, we will see the report at the end of the month.

CAG question: As water is pumped and treated from the site, are we seeing a decrease in contamination? We are not sure, the purpose for pumping on this project is just containment, not groundwater cleanup. Over the past few years, we have been looking at the data and it is stable. Whatever is being discharged to the river is clean.

CAG comment: To make a good decision about what to change we would need good data about how well the facility is performing and has been performing over time, and we don't seem to have that level of knowledge. EPA response: we understand and we only have that sort of data for the past few years and contamination has stayed steady in that groundwater. There is no real monitoring in place to identify to what degree the wastes stored there are still contributing to groundwater contamination.

### ***Fall Forum on Newark Cleanup Projects***

EPA is working with City of Newark to look at the variety of Superfund sites and help to expand the total look at the wide variety of work going on. There are communities at the new sites who have not been involved in these types of programs and we want to create an opportunity to help the newer communities learn from communities at other sites and other experienced stakeholders. We are calling it "Making a visible difference". We are also trying to work to get different parts of EPA together, and to bring different expertise to the room. Likely to be held this winter.

CAG Comment: NJIT is a good spot for meetings. However, it was pointed out that parking can be a problem when classes are in session. City Hall may be a spot as well.

### ***Urban Waters Project***

There is a new program called the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, and Passaic was identified as one of these sites around the country. There are 14 government agencies signed on to this partnership. A recent meeting was held to bring as many of these agencies as possible together and talk about the work going on at the Passaic. Liz Butler will send out a copy of a result regarding what is happening along the river. Identified the Terrell Homes area as a place to better coordinate. Working to put together some of the community interested projects and improve communication amongst themselves. EPA will provide more information as it becomes available. In the coming months, the Hudson River Foundation will be hiring an urban waters ambassador under an EPA grant.

CAG question: What's next? Get the ambassador hired, start with an initial list of community identified projects and assign an agency lead. Work with the Corps to create more of a public process in their work. Create a model or demonstration process to show how this might work better, set an example for agency cooperation.

CAG question: What is the role of the Ambassador? Liaison between communities and different agencies to help identify ideas and priorities, networking to get to groups and individuals who are not currently engaged. Coordinator/liaison.

### ***Reflections On Field Trip To The Fish Exchange Project***

The CAG visited the VETS aquaponics facility run by Rutgers University which manages the fish exchange program on the Passaic River. This is part of a program funded by the CPG to allow people who catch fish in the river to exchange it for clean fish.

To date about 145 fish (approximately 45 pounds) from three fishermen have been exchanged. Collected fish are frozen on site for later disposal. The fish growing on site are not yet large enough for exchange.

Seeking to create a zero-waste system which collects all of the waste produced by the fish and keeps the water clean. Excess water is then used to grow food, which is donated to a food pantry. CPG will be funding a third cohort of vets for the system.

CAG question: Concern that this could actually encourage more fishing in the Passaic? Does not seem to be an incentive, only three people have exchanged fish to date. Either way, it is still removing contaminated fish. About 45 total people fishing on the river have been talked to, not that many in Newark itself.

CAG question: Is there any sampling of the fish that you do collect? No.

CAG question: How long do you plan to conduct this activity? Right now it is year to year, just got funding for the second year of the fish exchange and third year of the Vets program. Also pursuing alternate funding through grants.

CAG question: Is it illegal to fish? No, there is a fish advisory warning people not to eat the fish. However, it is illegal to crab.

CAG question: Have you looked at the health aspects of this? Are these GMO tilapia? Raising fish that are hardy and could work within the process and conditions. Fish is not GMO, it is purchased from a New Jersey breeder.

CAG question: Has there been an exchange in the location? Now closed for the season, held it at the only place they saw fishermen.

CAG question: Which organizations were you using to get the word out? Vets are from Newark, went out to churches and local groups that had connection to the river.

CAG comment: A lot of the larger community groups don't seem to have been contacted. Answer—please let us know and we will be happy to come to meetings to present out work.

The website for this project is at [rutgersvets.org](http://rutgersvets.org)

### **Projected EPA Activities and CAG Schedule for 2016**

The CAG asked EPA to provide a general look at 2016 possible activities and calendar.

Winter cleanup forum in Early winter

Lower 8 mile ROD in February

17 mile study reports will be shared in 2016, no specific input points but just sharing of information. These reports are all in draft form now:

- Baseline human health assessment, summer
- Ecological risk assessment, fall
- Final RI, by end of 2016

Information regarding chemical monitoring at 10.9 by early summer

5 year review of Lister Ave. site draft by end of Nov, finalizing by end of 2015

Remedy evaluation process draft report, end of Nov., CAG input being sought

Tiara phase 2 removal, initial data in, not sure what happens next with that

Bioremediation, nothing much going on there for CAG information or review. Still trying to figure out if any equipment could physically do the work. Other work still at the bench scale.

Tiera phase 2 status is unknown. The action called for a CDF, but that is not likely to happen so we are collecting data but don't have a plan moving forward yet. Have not reached a conclusion about this yet.

CAG question: what happens once the ROD is released? Then there is a negotiation for a consent decree with the PRP (took three years on the Lister Ave. site).

It was noted that the ICC and RiverKeeper participated in a GAO audit request to review sediment superfund sites, in particular looking at Passaic River and Gowanus Canal for how they are being conducted and their consistency with other sites around the country.

The CAG will continue on its bi-monthly schedule through March and then identify any adjustments to meeting schedules beyond that time.

## **Public Comments**

What was the CAG concern with the signage with the fish exchange? The sign stated "Warning eating fish from the Lower Passaic is banned by the State of NJ" Technically this is not true, and the CAG was concerned that information was not accurate, these signs have since been taken down.

What if anything can EPA talk about in terms of bringing enforcement actions to Occidental and other parties? We are not here to talk about our enforcement approach. There are current actions in place with Occidental and they are part of the process on most activities. EPA chose not to discuss details at this meeting.

## **Tentative January Topics**

- Cleanup Forum

- Remedy evaluation process draft report